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Italian Mafia in the Netherlands

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Abstract

This article uses open sources to focus on the presence of Italian Mafia members and Italian Mafia groups in the Netherlands and examine the nature of their activities. Italian Mafia members and Italian Mafia groups have been active in the Netherlands since the 1980s, particularly in Amsterdam and its surroundings. The main conclusion drawn is that the Netherlands is used as a ‘hub’ to connect to the international trade in illegal goods, particularly narcotics. Known cases confirm the findings that Italians migrate to the Netherlands and sometimes invest in legal activities (e.g. pizzerias), whereas settled migrants sometimes perform odd jobs for Italian Mafia members. The Netherlands is also used as a refuge for Italian Mafia members on the run. To date, there is no sound evidence from open sources that extortion is part of the criminal activities that are performed in the Netherlands and the fact that there is a close intermingling of the upper world and the underworld is not supported by the available evidence.

Keywords: Italian Mafia; the Netherlands; drug trafficking; extortion; racketeering; transit crime.

1. Introduction

Although there are many differences between various Italian Mafia groups and Mafia clans (e.g. Savona, 2012), Italian Mafia is often used as a ‘container term’ in the Netherlands; a term that has had a profound effect on the political discussion on organized crime. For a long time, Dutch criminologists, as well as policy makers, regarded organized crime as a predominantly foreign phenomenon and it took until the late 1980s, and the early 1990s, for it to have a place on the political agenda and be raised as a subject in public debate (for a review, see Fijnaut et al., 1996; 1998; Kleemans, 2007). The timing of this ‘discovery’ in the late 1980s and early 1990s is remarkably similar to what happened in many other European countries and can be explained by the emergence of transnational drug markets, the opening of the borders with Eastern Europe (increasing mobility, human smuggling and human trafficking) and the public focus put on the fight between the Italian criminal justice system and Italian Mafia groups which resulted in, for example, the murder/killing of judges Falcone and Borsellino, which attracted widespread media attention throughout Europe (Fijnaut and Paoli, 2004 p. 603).

When organized crime reached the Dutch political agenda in the early 1990s, the threat was framed in terms of the ‘Mafia-type’ organizations which exist in Italy and the United States and in the ways in which they manifested themselves in society, such as, by gaining control of certain economic sectors or regions, then acting as ‘alternative governments’ (see e.g. Paoli, 2003; Calderoni, 2011, 2012; Savona, 2012). In 1992, the Dutch government issued an ambitious memorandum entitled ‘Organized Crime in the Netherlands: An Impression of its Threat and a Plan of Action’ (Ministerie van Justitie/Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken, 1992). According to the memorandum, organized crime was on the verge of infiltrating economic sectors and political institutions and was a major threat to the

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integrity of Dutch society. In public debate, the problems with the Mafia in Italy functioned as a powerful symbol of what could happen to the Netherlands as well.

Systematic empirical research into the nature of organized crime in the Netherlands, however, revealed that this picture was ill-founded and that it actually contradicted the phenomenon of organized crime as manifested in the Netherlands (for a review, see Kleemans, 2007). Briefly, ‘Mafia-type’ organizations were actually the exception rather than the rule and the concept of ‘criminal networks’ turned out to be a more fitting description of the rather flexible structures within which criminals operate. Furthermore, ‘racketeering’ turned out to be virtually absent. The primary business of organized crime in the Netherlands can more aptly be described in terms of ‘transit crime’. Criminal groups are primarily involved in international smuggling activities – drug trafficking, smuggling illegal immigrants, sex trafficking, arms trafficking, trafficking in stolen vehicles, and other transnational activities, such as money laundering and tax evasion (e.g., cigarette smuggling, oil fraud, VAT-fraud). The Netherlands can be either a country of destination, a transit country, or, especially in the case of synthetic drugs, a production country (Kleemans, 2007). Organized crime uses the same opportunity structure which facilitates legal trade and, to a certain extent, resembles the ‘transit economy’ of the Netherlands.

Summing up, the main influence of the Italian Mafia on public debate was in terms of their image rather than any actual influence exerted by them or any resemblance between them and the organized crime taking place in the Netherlands. In this article, we will focus on the presence of Italian Mafia members and Italian Mafia groups in the Netherlands and the nature of their activities. This article is based upon open sources,³ the limitations of which are discussed in Section 2. Section 3 presents a brief history of Italian Mafia in the Netherlands based upon the empirical evidence available. Section 4 is devoted specifically to an examination of the presence of the ‘Ndrangheta in the Netherlands, based on recent research conducted by the Dutch National Police Services (KLPD, 2011). Section 5 describes the research into a Camorra clan which had branches in Italy, Aberdeen and Amsterdam, and was carried out by Campana (2011). The final section contains the main conclusions on the presence of the Italian Mafia in the Netherlands and the activities they are predominantly involved in.

2. Data and limitations of open sources

Information on organized crime varies from ‘soft’ to ‘solid’. Criminal intelligence and documents at the start of a criminal investigation often have a strong hypothetical character. Only during a criminal investigation, when wiretaps, observation, and other methods generate concrete information, can these hypotheses be tested. The criminal reality may be found to be very different from what the criminal intelligence suggested. An example of research that makes use of these sources is the Dutch Organized Crime Monitor. During the period 1996-2012, 150 large-scale investigations, often spanning a period of several years, were systematically analysed (for more information, see Kleemans, 2007).

However, in the past, the Italian Mafia has not been given a high priority in Dutch criminal investigations which means that there has also been very little evidence available on the presence of Italian Mafia members and on their activities. The focus of many investigations, for example, was put on native Dutch organized crime networks, cocaine trafficking from Southern America and heroin trafficking from Turkey. Information on Italian Mafia members is often obtained as a ‘side-effect’ of such investigations, as these frequently provide a view of offenders from different national and ethnic backgrounds, including Italian offenders. Other prime reason for Italian offenders becoming more visible on the police radar may be the incidents occurring a local level (such as conflicts and murders) or international requests for arrests to be made. To date, therefore, the available open sources may have only offered a partial view of the presence of Italian Mafia members and Italian Mafia groups in the Netherlands and of their activities.

For this article, we collected the main evidence from the open sources available in the

³ This also means that descriptions of persons and their alleged criminal activities or alleged criminal connections refer to these specific open sources and have not been checked against criminal justice information.

Netherlands. This meant that we had to rely heavily on published scientific reports, police reports, and books written by investigative journalists. As we cannot check the sources of this information, we can only judge whether or not the claims made in these reports are based on their sources or whether they are speculative which also means that this article only gives a partial view of some criminal groups and some criminal activities. If groups or activities were not investigated by the police or described by journalists, they will have gone unnoticed.

3. A brief history of Italian Mafia in the Netherlands

As Varese (2011 p. 7) pointed out, there may be various reasons why Italian Mafia members are present in countries outside of Italy. One is the generalised migration pattern of the population where Mafias are well established, such as western Sicily and Calabria. People move and Mafia members move as well, for various personal reasons. As a result they may be more likely to engage in Mafia activities in the new territory. However, Campana (2011) showed that they may also adapt to the new territory, for example, being involved in racketeering in their country of origin ('governing'), while trading on international markets like any other actor in a different country, such as the Netherlands. A second reason Varese mentions is 'soggiorno obbligato', a policy that punished convicted Mafiosi by forcing them to relocate outside their area of origin. Part of Varese's research (2011) was actually based on cases such as these and revealed the success that they had in becoming entrenched in the new territory. However, Mafia groups may also fail in their attempts to start racketeering in different territory, since racketeering is a very difficult business to move to a different territory (cf. Reuter, 1983; Gambetta, 1993). One final reason why Mafia members may be pushed to migrate is to escape Mafia wars or prosecution in their countries of origin or to search for particular resources or investment opportunities abroad.⁴

Several criminal groups from different national backgrounds are active in the Netherlands. Italian Mafia members and Mafia groups may be part of this mixture of different nationalities. The first serious study into the presence of Italian criminal groups was performed by the Fijnaut Research Group in the context of a Parliamentary Enquiry Committee into criminal investigation methods (Fijnaut et al. 1996; 1998). The Fijnaut Research Group studied the nature and scale of organized crime in the Netherlands, based upon extensive analysis of criminal justice sources. One of their particular studies focused on the Italian Mafia and found several indications of their presence in the Netherlands. For one, in 1988 several members of the Roman '*banda della Magliana*' had liaisons with Colombian drug traffickers in order to import drugs for the Italian drug market. According to police information, one of the members was also connected to the 'Ndrangheta. A police investigation in 1989 also showed that an Italian couple had tried to export cocaine from the Netherlands using a motor home and were arrested with 45 kilos of cocaine. According to the Fijnaut Research Group findings, alleged Camorra members had also shot drug dealers in the city centre of Amsterdam, after a conflict about payment; all signs that the Italian Mafia was active on the Dutch drug market. A second indication, according to Fijnaut et al (1996 p. 158), was the discovery of the body of a Turkish man in the surroundings of Utrecht in 1990 who was allegedly connected to the trade of arms and narcotics and who had liaisons of the Sicilian Mafia. One of these Sicilian Mafia members had resided in the Netherlands for quite a long time and had committed several crimes, whereas he was suspected in Rome of extortion and trading in narcotics. A second person ran several pizzerias, according to the Italian justice for reasons of money laundering. In 1987 another prominent member came to the Netherlands, escaping arrest in Rome. Between 1989 and 1990, a dozen criminal investigations in the Netherlands focused upon Italian persons, allegedly connected to Italian Mafia groups (Fijnaut, 1996 p. 158).

Another incident which took place in 1990 was the killing of a Turkish man in a pizzeria in the centre of Amsterdam which related to a payment conflict with two Camorristas (De Jong & Voskuil, 2010 pp. 118-119). One of these Camorristas was arrested in 1991, after a traffic violation, which resulted in

⁴ A more extensive elaboration of 'push factors' and 'pull factors' for criminal groups is provided by Morselli, Turcott and Tenti (2011).

the seizure of 23 kilos of cocaine from the boot of his car and 69 weapons from his house. The cocaine was from a cocaine supply line running from Colombia and Venezuela to the Netherlands and Belgium. All these incidents led the Dutch criminal justice system to become aware of the fact that the Italian Mafia should be investigated, though investigations were not conducted by the Dutch police (De Jong & Voskuil, 2010 p. 119). After a thorough investigation in 1992, the Centrale Recherche Informatiedienst (CRI) (Central Criminal Information Unit) of the Dutch police, whose purpose was to get an overview of Mafia type organisations active in the Netherlands, claimed that it was possible that various 'Mafia-type organisations', in particular the 'Ndrangheta, were present in the Netherlands. (CRI, 1992 as mentioned in KLPD, 2011; p. 11).

Another large investigation was also conducted in 1992 into a narcotics supply line called 'Campina' (Fijnaut et al., 1996 p. 162). Campina is a well-known Dutch milk company, but this code name was to be read as 'Camorra-pizzeria-Naples'. The focus of the investigation was on the presence of the Italian Camorra in the Southwest of the Netherlands. Italian criminals bought cocaine and heroin from various criminal groups of different ethnic backgrounds (Turkish, Antillean and Colombian). Money was transferred from Italy to The Hague and drugs were transported to Naples, at least 15 or 16 times according to one of the sources. Three Italians were directly connected to these activities, two of whom worked in pizzerias. They also had liaisons with other Italians in the 'pizzeria sector' who had criminal records in serious crime. The management of these transactions was led from Italy. In 1993, members of the Camorra were arrested while making a transaction with Colombian drug dealers. The two Italians received prison sentences of five and four years (Fijnaut et al., 1996 p. 163). There were also indications that Mafia members went to Rotterdam to buy illegal cigarettes for the Italian market, a picture which was also confirmed by Gratteri and Nicaso (2008 p. 250), who claimed that there were indications that the Calabrian 'Ndrangheta also used the Rotterdam harbour to import illegal goods and narcotics.

Summarizing, the picture of the Fijnaut Research Group was that several Mafia groups were active on Dutch territory and that the Netherlands was being used as a criminal marketplace, in order to acquire illegal goods such as drugs. At the time of the research conducted by the Fijnaut Research Group and the Parliamentary Enquiry Committee, the claim was that the Italian Mafia used the Netherlands to get a good position on the illegal goods markets. Their presence was viewed as a risk for the criminal justice system and the rule of law, as persons from the licit society were allegedly facilitating Mafia members. Furthermore, the risk of deadly violence was mentioned, referring to the killings of two dealers in the Amsterdam city centre by Fijnaut et al (1996). Briefly, the presence of the Mafia was clear, but the information was eclectic and based upon only a few criminal investigations. The main conclusion was that Mafia members and groups used the Netherlands as a market for trading in illegal goods.

Criminal investigations were the main basis for the conclusions drawn by the Fijnaut Research Group (Fijnaut et al., 1996). These sources, however, reveal little about the reasons why Italian Mafia members come to the Netherlands. Over the years, several investigative journalists have tried to find other sources to describe the Italian Mafia and their way of life. In the Netherlands, two investigative journalists, Stan de Jong and Koen Voskuil, did research into the presence of Mafia members and Mafia groups in the Netherlands (De Jong & Voskuil, 2010), interviewing several Mafia members who were detained in prison and decided to become pentiti. In their book 'Mafia in the Netherlands' they claim that the presence of Italian Mafia clans is underestimated by the Dutch criminal justice authorities and that several members of different Mafia groups enter the Netherlands, trade in narcotics, and then leave again.

One case, known as the 'A12-motorway-murders', can also be linked to the Italian Mafia group the 'Sacra Corona Unita' (De Jong & Voskuil, 2010 pp. 86-89). On February, 22, 2002, two dead bodies were discovered along the A12 motorway near Woerden, in central Netherlands. The bodies were of Brazilian men. According to the interpretation of testimonies of clan members which were possibly related to these murders, they were the consequence of a ripdeal. The leader of the clan, residing in Amsterdam, initially planned to just steal or 'rip' the drugs, but decided later on that it was more convenient to murder the two Brazilian men and seize control of the drugs (De Jong & Voskuil, 2010). At this moment, it is still not clear who was exactly responsible for this assassination. A dubious role is also ascribed to a restaurant owner in Amsterdam, who was involved in doing odd jobs for Italians on the run,

providing housing (anonymously) and money, according to Voskuil and De Jong (2010, p. 72).

Another important arrest happened in 2007. At the request of the Italian criminal justice authorities, the Dutch police arrested Guiseppe de Tomasso, a member of the Camorra who arrived in the Netherlands in early 2007, in Zandvoort, a seaside resort close to Amsterdam. De Tomasso maintained contact with Italian restaurant owners in Haarlem (a city in the vicinity of Amsterdam). According to his landlord, De Tomasso felt completely safe in the Netherlands and had a large network. Back in Italy, De Tomasso was being prosecuted for membership of a criminal organization and the international trade of narcotics. According to the Italian criminal justice authorities, he was connected to a Mafia family from Naples (De Jong & Voskuil, 2010 pp. 111-122).

The aforementioned book 'The Italian Mafia in the Netherlands' includes many examples, a few of which have been described above. The main picture pertains to several Mafia members residing in the Netherlands, a part of their activities involving getting access to drug markets, trading in narcotics, and killing opponents. Presence in the Netherlands is particularly connected to trading in narcotics. Furthermore, Forgione (2012)⁵ concludes in his study that various Mafia members reside in Amsterdam and Rotterdam to offer 'logistic support' to their organizations. What the term 'logistic support' involves, however, is not clearly specified. Various 'pentiti' have given testimony, claiming that the Netherlands is generally viewed as a 'safe haven' where they have little to fear from the criminal justice authorities.

Looking back at this brief history of the Italian Mafia in the Netherlands, one may conclude that there are several reasons for Mafia members to be present in the Netherlands. The Fijnaut Research Group focused upon the 1980s and the early 1990s and concluded that several Italian Mafia members were present in this country, the primary reason for their presence being searching for connections on the drugs market and migration (Fijnaut et al., 1996; 1998). Other reasons were possibly escaping the criminal justice authorities. A number of Italians were also engaged in activities in the licit economy, such as starting and exploiting Italian restaurants. In some cases, migrated Italians still had connections with their countries of origin and with Italian Mafia groups in Italy and facilitated criminal activities in the Netherlands, for example, by providing shelter for Mafia members on the run. From the countries of origin, these contacts were also used to gain access to new illegal markets, particularly to support the international trade in narcotics. As mentioned before, in some cases 'rip deals' occurred and violence was used against opponents, which produced the most visible indications of the presence of the Italian Mafia in the Netherlands. The studies by investigative journalists De Jong and Voskuil (2010) and Forgione (2012) generally reinforce these observations. Known cases confirm the findings that Italians migrated to the Netherlands and sometimes invested in legal activities, whereas settled migrants sometimes performed odd jobs for Italian Mafia members. The Netherlands is also mentioned as a refuge for Italian Mafia members on the run. These studies provide no sound evidence that extortion is part of the criminal activities that are being performed in the Netherlands. However, one must also recognize the fact that this information can only be obtained if the criminal justice authorities specifically focus on investigating 'Mafia-type' organisations and the activities in which they engage. In Section 4, we will describe the presence of the 'Ndrangheta in the Netherlands, based upon a recent report compiled by the Dutch National Police Services (KLPD, 2011).

4. The 'Ndrangheta in the Netherlands

In Diemen, close to Amsterdam, on March, 12, 2009, the Dutch police arrested Giovanni Strangio, a member of the 'Ndrangheta who was held responsible for the murders of 'Ndrangheta members in Duisburg (Germany) in 2007. These murders originated from a conflict between two 'Ndrine' clans in the town of San Luca during a carnival (De Jong & Voskuil, 2010 pp. 143-145). The Duisburg murders prompted the German criminal justice authorities to investigate the presence of Mafia groups on German territory. Similarly, the Dutch National Police Services (KLPD) started to look into the activities of the 'Ndrangheta in the Netherlands. The public report concludes that several 'Ndranghetisti have settled in

⁵ The authors would like to thank Paolo Campana (Oxford University) for translating relevant parts of the Forgione publications.

Amsterdam and its surroundings (KLPD, 2011). It also sums up several activities of the 'Ndrangheta in the Netherlands. It is important to note that these factors may also be applicable to other Mafia-type organisations. First, the Netherlands is mentioned as a 'refuge' for 'latitanti', persons escaping the Italian criminal justice authorities. These 'latitanti' play an important role in the trade in narcotics and use the Netherlands both as a refuge and as a point of access to transnational drug markets (KLPD, 2011 p. 8). This is quite similar to other nationalities, such as British criminals seeking refuge in Amsterdam and trading in drugs. Soudijn and Huisman (2010) investigated this specific group and concluded that the Netherlands was attractive because of its tolerant drug policy and relatively mild sanctions.⁶ In some cases, they used the extensive network of settled British criminals. It was remarkable that the British were not formally registered as inhabitants, but were able to live, act and move around without much trouble. One important facilitating factor, for British, Italian and other criminals alike, is the presence of facilitators who can offer accommodation: brokers who are able to offer housing, for cash, without proper registration of who lives in these premises (KLPD, 2011 p. 54; Kruisbergen, Van de Bunt and Kleemans, 2012 p. 205).

Second, an important criminal activity conducted by the Mafia groups is the import, export and trade in narcotics (KLPD, 2011 p. 57). This picture seems to be mainly based on information about Mafia members gleaned from other investigations (not primarily focused upon the Italian Mafia). The Netherlands seems to function as a transit country for narcotics (De Jong & Voskuil, 2010 p. 53). The Italian authorities provided the Dutch authorities with information in 2008 about large quantities of synthetic drugs that were coming through the port of Rotterdam. According to Gratteri and Nicaso (2008 p. 250), the harbour of Rotterdam is an important import 'hub' for drugs for the 'Ndrangheta. This claim was based upon seizures of cocaine by the Dutch authorities in the port of Rotterdam, such as a seizure of 44 kilograms of cocaine for a 'Ndrangheta clan.

Third, the literature mentions investments of criminal money in real estate, restaurants and residential houses (De Jong & Voskuil, 2010; Campana, 2011). The KLPD study, however, did not indicate that any property is being acquired by the 'Ndrangheta in the Netherlands, but there are signs that this is happening in Germany and Belgium (KLPD, 2011 p. 65). There are no sound indications that acquiring property by 'Mafia-type' organisations has ever been investigated by the Dutch police.

Fourth, there is no evidence of any 'corruption' by government agencies. The report mentions an interview with Fijnaut who claimed that members of the 'Ndrangheta would probably avoid contact with criminal justice authorities in order to keep their criminal activities hidden (KLPD, 2011 p. 71, Interview 26). Nevertheless, if the Netherlands is an important transit country, the report suggests that the interests in keeping drug supply lines active is high and that seeking to influence criminal justice authorities may possibly be a part of that. However, these claims in the report are not supported by any data.

Fifth, the report claims that the 'Ndrine' are possibly quite active in the purchase and sale of weapons in the Netherlands (KLPD, 2011 p. 71). Sixth, the report suggests that there is no evidence that members of the 'Ndrangheta are currently extorting hotel, restaurant or pub owners in the Netherlands (KLPD, 2011 p. 73). Finally, the use of Italian hotel, restaurant and pub owners as 'cover' is described and it is notable that, in three investigations conducted by the National Investigative Police Agency, pizzerias emerge as covers. This sector was already mentioned as one which might be sensitive for infiltration by the Fijnaut Research Group (Fijnaut et al., 1996; 1998).

5. The Camorra in the Netherlands

Another interesting source on 'Mafia-type organisations' in the Netherlands is Campana (2011), who studied the diversification of Mafia groups in different territories, particularly in Italy, the Netherlands and Scotland. Campana tests two different notions; first, the notion that Mafia organizations are able to relocate and expand their business outside their country of origin, referring to the 'global crime' definition

⁶ Recently, a specialized police unit arrested numerous British criminals in Amsterdam and its surroundings, so the 'safe haven' image may be history.

of Castells as “*the networking of powerful criminal organizations, and their associates, in shared activities throughout the planet*” (Castells, 2000 p. 166). In this way, Mafia groups used the opportunities and resources in other territories to expand their illegal business. The second notion is the ‘local embeddedness’ of organized crime groups in their countries of origin. Criminal activities are difficult to move, as it is difficult to monitor them from a distance. Furthermore, several activities are dependent upon having a locally-based reputation and reliable information. This means that certain activities, such as ‘racketeering’, are difficult to move to a different territory (e.g. Reuter, 1983; Gambetta, 1993).

Campana (2011) investigated the De La Torre clan, a Camorra group with branches in Italy (Campania), Scotland (Aberdeen), and the Netherlands (Amsterdam). He used a dataset of 1,824 wire-tapped calls between 202 different contacts and concluded, after further selection of clan members, that the group comprised 51 members, 96% of whom originated from the area in which the clan resides. Six members lived outside of Italy, which according to Campana gave the clan a transnational dimension. The activities of the group are divided into different categories: ‘management’, ‘protection activities’, ‘business in the illegal and legal economy’ and ‘resource acquisition’. It became clear that half of the activities of the group related to ‘protection activities’ and ‘business in the illegal and legal economy’. Protection activities include traditional forms of extortion, also known as ‘racketeering’ (Kleemans, 2007). It is notable that 38% of all the telephone calls concerned ‘management tasks’, in particular, to solve conflicts and disputes between different clan members. Campana concludes that the clan acts as a monopolist in the protection racket in their territory of origin (Campania), but that a protection racket is a difficult business to move or expand. The Camorra group did not expand its core business and is still highly dependent on its territory of origin, where the vast majority of the members live. Nevertheless, they diversified their activities by using Amsterdam as a ‘hub’ in international drug trafficking and by making investments in Aberdeen in the food and catering sector, in the construction industry, and in real estate.

As aforementioned, Amsterdam is described as a ‘hub’ for criminal activities (Campana, 2011; Forgione, 2009); clan members do not sell cocaine on the streets of Amsterdam, but use this ‘hub’ to forge contacts with other narcotics traffickers. Campana (2011 p. 221) concludes that the clan ‘*operates along the lines of functional diversification*’. On the subject of violence, the study concludes that its use is necessary for the survival of the group. At local level, the group competes with the state to provide protection, but the group uses less violence in countries where the state has a stronger monopoly of the use of violence. According to Campana (2011), Mafia groups may change their modus operandi across territories: brooking no competition in their territory of origin, while behaving just like any other actor would in other places. This conclusion drawn by Campana is interesting from a theoretical point of view, yet one should be reminded that the empirical research only relates to the activities of a single clan, and that the information is rather dated now. Whether or not these conclusions equally apply to other clans and Mafia-type organisations is unknown (see also, Savona, 2012). It is also possible that clans change their methods and activities fairly quickly, in response to investigations carried out by international and national criminal justice authorities. Thus, the conclusions are theoretically interesting, yet should be tested more widely in empirical research.

6. Conclusions

The image of the Italian Mafia has had a profound effect on the political discussion on organized crime in the Netherlands. The image of how Italian Mafia groups had gained control over certain territories or economic sectors, acting as ‘alternative governments’, was much more important than the actual influence they exerted in the Netherlands and more important than any resemblance they might have with the organized crime taking place in the Netherlands. Furthermore, this image put criminal investigation strategies on the wrong track, since ‘Mafia-type’ organizations were the exception rather than the rule, and activities of organized crime groups in the Netherlands were found to be quite different from the traditionally best known Mafia activities (‘racketeering’). In terms of Campana (2011), ‘trading’ on illegal markets instead of ‘governing’ was shown to be the major business of organized crime in the

Netherlands.

Nevertheless, Italian Mafia members and Italian Mafia groups have been active in the Netherlands for at least 30 years since the 1980s, particularly in Amsterdam and its surroundings. The main conclusion is that they use the Netherlands as a 'hub' to connect to the international trade in illegal goods, especially narcotics. Known cases confirm the findings that Italians migrate to the Netherlands and sometimes invest in legal activities (e.g. pizzerias), whereas settled migrants sometimes perform odd jobs for Italian Mafia members. The Netherlands is also mentioned as a refuge for Italian Mafia members on the run. The studies provide no sound evidence that extortion is part of the criminal activities that are performed in the Netherlands and a close intermingling of the upper world and the underworld is not supported by the available evidence from open sources.

A recent study by the Dutch National Police Services focused specifically on the presence of the 'Ndrangheta in the Netherlands (KLPD, 2011) and its findings were remarkably similar to earlier research into Italian Mafia members and Mafia groups in general; members of the 'Ndrangheta reside in the Netherlands and sometimes use settled Italian migrants to perform odd jobs for them. An important service entails providing shelter for Italian Mafia members who are trying to escape Italian criminal justice authorities. They may use settled Italian migrants to provide shelter, but they may also turn to other facilitators, providing, for example, housing for cash without proper registration of who lives in the premises; the members of the 'Ndrangheta also use the Netherlands for trafficking and trading in narcotics. As mentioned in Fijnaut et al. (1996), the Netherlands are viewed as an important 'hub' in the international trade in narcotics and are used to gain access to international drug markets. Finally, extortion and racketeering are only mentioned as part of the activities in their places of origin, but the open sources available at this moment do not support the image that these are a substantial part of their activities in the Netherlands.

However, one must recognize the fact that such information can only be obtained if the criminal justice authorities specifically focus on investigating these activities. In the past, the Italian Mafia has not been given a high priority in Dutch criminal investigations. The focus of many investigations has been on native Dutch organized crime networks, for example, on cocaine trafficking from Southern America and heroin trafficking from Turkey. Information on Italian Mafia members is often obtained as a 'side-effect' of such investigations, as these often provide views of offenders from different national and ethnic backgrounds, including Italian offenders. Other important reasons why Italian offenders become visible on the police radar may be the incidents which occur at local level (such as conflicts and murders) or international requests for making arrests. To date, therefore, the available open sources can only provide a partial view of the presence of Italian Mafia members and Italian Mafia groups in the Netherlands and their activities. Perhaps other conclusions may be drawn in the future if more police effort is put into investigating Italian Mafia members in the Netherlands.

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